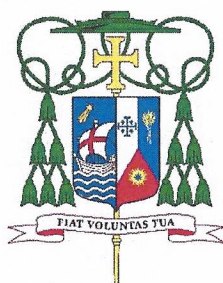


DIocese OF SALT LAKE CITY
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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

MEMORANDUM

August 20, 2021

TO: All Clergy, Religious, Seminarians, Principals, Diocesan Staff, Religious Education Directors

FROM: Bishop Oscar A. Solis

WHAT: Bishop's Message and Diocesan Updates

Opening of School Year 2021 – 2022

I extend my warm greetings to all our students, principals, faculty and staff, Religious Education directors, catechists, and volunteers as we welcome the new 2021-2022 school year. This is a time of new beginnings; everyone is excited to go back to the “new normal.” I am sure after a year of many disruptions and challenges this global health crisis brought; we all wish the pandemic was far behind us.

Unfortunately, we are not quite out of the pandemic yet and the work is not yet over. The emergence of the Delta Covid variant and the surge of infection affecting more of the unvaccinated and children, makes it more complex for everyone. However, we all have learned from our experiences last year. We also have more resources and support available for our children that will help sustain the continuation of their educational journey, achieve levels of growth and development, and reach their fullest potential and success.

I am very grateful for the overall service, support, diligence, collaboration and prudence of all our pastors, administrators, faculty, and staff, and for their sacrifice for our students across the diocese. Your great thought, hard work, planning, common sense, application of reasonable safety and health protocols, and cooperation help in mitigating the effects of the virus infection, kept our schools and religious formation programs open, and enabled us to do what some thought would be impossible.

This year will be another challenging time for all of us, with the Delta virus strain that according to health authorities spreads faster and is much deadlier affecting more the unvaccinated and then children. However, I am confident our parishes and schools will be able to face again the hurdle before us with great success. Much will depend on our ability to foster greater collaboration and partnership as we strive to do the best for our children and in pursuit of the well-being of the community.

Therefore, I encourage everyone to observe the updated diocesan health and safety protocols at all our Church and school premises. As Christian believers, we believe in the sanctity of life of every person. Let us practice charity, sacrifice, and care for one another through simple acts of wearing a mask or facial covering, physical distancing, and sanitizing practices. Health authorities also attest that inoculation of the vaccine significantly prevents infection. If not yet vaccinated, please consider getting the vaccine which the Church teaches is morally acceptable; encourage others to do so as well.

Diocese of Salt Lake City On “*Religious Exemption for Covid-19 Vaccine*”

I ask our priests NOT to grant religious exemptions for COVID-19 vaccines. Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, has made it very clear that *“it is morally acceptable to take any of the vaccines, and we have the moral responsibility to get vaccinated.”* In a recent Papal Audience, he stated that *“being vaccinated with vaccines authorized by the competent authorities is an act of love. And contributing to ensure the majority of people are vaccinated is an act of love - love for oneself, love for one’s family and friends, love for all people.”* *“Vaccination is a simple but profound way of promoting the common good and caring for each other, especially the most vulnerable.”* *When each individual makes a small act of charity, like getting the COVID-19 vaccine, every gesture added together can transform the world.”* (Global Ad Campaign, August 18, 2021, Rome).

The Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith earlier on December 21, 2020 stated *that the Church “does not prohibit the use of any vaccine, and generally encourages the use of safe and effective vaccines as a way of safeguarding personal and public health.”* Hence, by issuing a religious exemption to the vaccine, a priest would be *“acting in contradiction to the directives of the Pope and is participating in an act that could have serious consequences to others.”*

Archbishop Dolan (New York) expressed that *“there is no religious basis for a priest to issue a religious exemption to the vaccine.”* *We just don’t want to encourage it; we don’t want to lead people on that they should be able to do it.* He added, *“priests should not be active participants to such actions by granting religious exemptions.”* *“Imagine a student receiving a religious [vaccine] exemption, contracting the virus and spreading it throughout the campus. Clearly, this would be an embarrassment to the archdiocese. Some argue that it might also impose personal liability on the priest.”*

Bishop McElroy (San Diego) also said: *“The core foundation of the Catholic church is always going to be the common good. That’s one of the reasons we have to vaccinate. The church stands behind all vaccines as an act of love towards one’s neighbor. Hence, I ask our priests to “caringly decline” any requests for endorsement from parishioners seeking a religious exemption from a COVID-19 vaccine mandate.*

Furthermore, Archbishop Jose Gomez (Archdiocese of Los Angeles, USCCB President) *recommends that all members of the Catholic community who can receive a COVID-19 vaccine should do so. The Archdiocese is not providing individuals with religious exemption letters to avoid vaccination against COVID-19. “Receiving one of the COVID-19 vaccines ought to be understood as an act of charity toward the other members of our community. In this way, being vaccinated safely against COVID-19 should be considered an act of love of our neighbor and part of our moral responsibility for the common good.”* Here are some helpful information and links to understand why the Archdiocese does not consider the COVID-19 vaccine to be morally objectionable and why it encourages all the faithful to get vaccinated.

USCCB, *Moral Considerations Regarding the New COVID-19 Vaccines* The following links might be helpful in understanding the morality of receiving the vaccine:

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20201221_notavaccini11anticovid_en.html

<https://www.usccb.org/news/2021/us-bishop-chairmen-doctrine-and-pro-life-address-use-johnson-johnson-covid-19-vaccine>

<https://www.catholic.org/CCC-vaccine-moral-acceptability>

Please exercise our pastoral duty responsibly and caringly decline any requests for endorsement from parishioners seeking a religious exemption from a COVID-19 vaccine mandate. Our faith in God, love for one another and collective efforts are essential in providing a safe, healthy, and Christian environment in our parishes, missions, schools and in our society.

Thank you and prayerful wishes for your continued support and cooperation. Kindly remember the needs of our diocese as well as me in your prayers. God bless you always and all the people of God under our care.

DIOCESAN UPDATES

I am happy to share with you the new list of some of the ministries and organizations with the new Spiritual Directors/Chaplains and Advisors as well as newly appointed Deans. We are grateful for their leadership role and partnership in extending the pastoral outreach of our church to our diocese.

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|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Boys & Girl Scouts | Fr. Rafael Murillo |
| Catholic Woman's League | Fr. Anastasius Iwuoha |
| Charismatic Renewal | Fr. Arokia David Dass |
| Renovacion Carismatica | Fr. Javier Virgen |
| Clergy Continuing Education | Fr. Martin Diaz |
| Cursillo in Christianity | Msgr. Francis Mannion |
| Dioc. Council of Catholic Women | Fr. Ariel Durian |
| Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) | Deacon Mike Boulson |
| Detention / Prison Ministry | Fr. Stephen Tilley |
| Hispanic Media Ministry | Fr. Jose A. Barrera |
| Hospital Ministry | Fr. Noel Ancheta |
| Knights of Columbus | Fr. Erik Richtsteig |
| Liturgical Commission | Fr. Sam Dinsdale |
| Marriage Encounter | Fr. Anil Kakumanu |
| Encuentro Matrimonial | Fr. Marco Lopez |
| Multi-Cultural Ministry | Fr. Sebastien Sasa |
| People with Disabilities | Fr. Rogelio Felix-Rosas |
| Respect Life Commission | Fr. Erik Richtsteig |

Campus Ministries

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| BYU/UVU | Fr. Anil Kakumanu |
| College of Eastern University (Price) | Fr. Arokia David Dass |
| Dixie University | Fr. David Bittmenn |
| Snow College (Ephrem) | Fr. Fidel Barrera |
| Southern University of Utah | Fr. Adrian Komar |
| University of Utah | Fr. Cody Jorgensen, OP |
| USU – St. Jerome Newman Center | Fr. Joseph Minuth |
| Weber State University | Fr. Charles Cummins |

Deans

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Salt Lake Deanery | Very Rev. Christopher Gray (newly appointed) |
| Wasatch Deanery | Very Rev. Dominic Briese, OP (newly appointed) |
| Northern Deanery | Very Rev. Clarence Sandoval |
| Easter Deanery | Very Rev. Albert Kileo |
| Southwestern Deanery | Very Rev. David J. Bittmenn |

DIOCESAN MINISTRY PROGRAMS

National Eucharistic Revival: *To renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist;* Very Rev. Christopher Gray, USCCB Contact Person and Diocesan Liaison

Next Synod of Bishops: *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission;* Rev. John Evans USCCB Contact Person and Diocesan Liaison

Celebration of World Youth Day in the Particular Churches on the Solemnity of Jesus Christ the King of the Universe 2021: Remind youth and young adults of God's boundless love and affection for them (Christus Vivit #115); All Deans, Diocesan Liaison

PERMANENT DIACONATE (Deacon Scott Dodge, Director)

Deacon Dodge informed us of the following:

- that the number of deacons available in the diocese is dwindling and that the lineup of future classes will be critical.
- newly renovated Diaconate Council, which will include designated subcommittees for the Ongoing Diaconate Formation, the well-being of deacons' marriage lives (with coordination through Family Life Director Crystal Painter), for deacons' wives, and lastly a subcommittee for retired deacons and deacon widows.
- Currently there are 16 candidates considering formation; he requests our priests to assist in seeking candidates for the diaconate.
- Fr. John Ray Marek of the Congar Institute will assist with the Diaconate Formation Program as it moves forward in its restructure; priests assist in seeking candidates for the diaconate.
- plan is to have a class starting every three years; there may also be several current bilingual candidates who could qualify for ordination on a more accelerated schedule.

Year of St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church

September: St. Joseph and the Dignity of Work
"Man as God's Co-Creator – Laborer"

Reflection Ideas:

"The crisis of our time, which is economic, social, cultural and spiritual, can serve as a summons for all of us to rediscover the value, the importance and necessity of work for bringing about a new "normal" from which no one is excluded. Saint Joseph's work reminds us that God himself, in becoming man, did not disdain work. The loss of employment that affects so many of our brothers and sisters, and has increased as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, should serve as a summons to review our priorities. Let us implore Saint Joseph the Worker to help us find ways to express our firm conviction that no young person, no person at all, no family should be without work!" (Pope Francis, *Patris Corde*, No.6)

"We were created with a vocation to work. The goal should not be that technological progress increasingly replace human work, for this would be detrimental to humanity. Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfilment. Helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work." (Pope Francis *Laudato Si*, No. 128)

"Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation." (USCCB). "The Church considers it her task always to call attention to the dignity and rights of those who work, to condemn situations in which that dignity and those rights are violated, and to help to guide [social] changes so as to ensure authentic progress by man and society." *Laborem Exercens*, Pope John Paul II

"God is the sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures' co-operation. This use is not a sign of weakness, but rather a token of almighty God's greatness and goodness. For God grants his creatures not only their existence, but also the dignity of acting on their own, of being causes and principles for each other, and thus of co-operating in the accomplishment of his plan." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*)

“To human beings God even gives the power of freely sharing in his providence by entrusting them with the responsibility of "subduing" the earth and having dominion over it...¹⁶⁸ for their own good and that of their neighbors. They then fully become "God's fellow workers" and co-workers for his kingdom.”¹⁷⁰ (CCC #308)

References:

- <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/the-dignity-of-work-and-the-rights-of-workers>)
- http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papafrancesco-lettera-ap_20201208_patris-corde.html
- http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papafrancesco_2015054_enciclica-laudato-si.html

ATTENTION: PASTORS AND ADMINISTRATORS: - Promote and Plan for the Diocesan Pastoral Congress (September 18, 2021).

Theme: Know Christ, Live Christ, Lead others to Christ

Pastoral Congress is an excellent vehicle for catechists and all parish leaders to gather once again. It'll be a great opportunity to share in the Good News and the growing understanding it provides for everyone.

For the very first time, Congress will be held in each parish.

It will be parish-based and there will be no cost to attend. Information and details are through your local parish.

We are pleased to announce that Brother Loughlan Sofield, ST and Fray Sergio Serrano, OP will be our guest keynote speakers. They will be coming to us through the Congar Institute for Ministry Development, San Antonio, TX.

For more information please visit: <https://www.dioslc.org/offices/office-of-faith-formation/congress>

Upcoming Events:

- *Bishop's Dinner – September 8, 2021*
- *Priests Council Meeting, September 8, 2021*
- *DCCW Annual Conference – September 11-12, 2021*
- *Diocesan Pastoral Congress – September 18, 2021*
- *Respect Life Week – Life Chain ? c/o Crystal Painter*
- *Deacons' Retreat – October 1-3, 2021*
- *Diocesan Red Mass – 12noon, October 8, 2021, Cathedral of the Madeleine*
- *Marian Intercultural Procession and Mass (Ogden) – October 9, 2021*
- *Clergy Fall Convocation – October 11-14, 2021*
- *Legion of Mary 100 Year anniversary Mass - 5pm, October 16, 2021, Cathedral*
- *World Mission Sunday – October 24, 2021*
- *CCS Awards Dinner – October 26, 2021*